

Oral Carswell Ritchie
by Son Dale Ritchie
WWII Veteran
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Yesterday I toured Pier 21 and stood on the deck where my father left for Europe and returned to Canada during World War II. My tears dropped to the floor where he stood in line with a jubilant group of teenaged boys, off to see the world, almost 60 years earlier. I felt how he must have felt, and was moved with overwhelming emotion at the memory of his circumstance. He was 32; older than most. He had experienced the pain of the loss of his first wife and baby at child-birth. He had recovered and married my mother, who was now 7 months pregnant, and who would be very much alone and filled with the uncertainty of his fate. How would things go? Would he return? I once asked a War buddy of my father's what he was like Overseas. He said "he wasn't much of a mixer". This surprised me to no end, as everyone knew him, and he was so friendly to everyone in town. He hated the War and everything to do with it. He just wanted to come home; to be at home with his wife and new family.

I'm sure he couldn't avoid feelings of loneliness and despair, knowing the German U Boats were waiting for them as they crossed. He told us how they had converted the Queen Mary into a Troop carrier. He had a hammock with a hundred others strung up in the swimming pool, that had been drained to accommodate them. The ship was only 5 years old but held over 10,000 men, in their make-shift accommodations. But my father was fortunate. He returned to his wife and three year old boy, that he had never seen, uninjured, but nevertheless traumatized from his experiences. We often heard how my mother's feet "flew" to greet him, and have the letters to diary their thoughts during those incredible years. I can imagine his joy and relief to disembark at Pier 21 and to be home.

